

Sacred Heart Parish

Parish Pastoral Council

Chairman's Report 2011

Fellow Parishioners, it is my pleasure to present a report on Parish Activities for the past year. We have had a busy twelve months.

September saw the start of preparation of children for 1st Eucharist, and Fr Joe was ably assisted by Joan Fleming, Leanne Bremner and Carole McNeill in this important ministry. Last September also saw Snow Wratten lead a team of paver repairers, and Geoff Dodd plant roses near the Garage. We also acknowledged Child Protection Sunday with white balloons – an initiative continued this weekend.

October saw the long-awaited Canonisation of Australia's first saint, Mary MacKillop, which was marked by a novena, and a special viewing of the event. Bishop Luc Matthys visited to talk with us about possible renovations to the sanctuary of our church; and we all enjoyed the annual Parish Picnic at the end of the month, which saw the broad spectrum of parishioners young and old enjoy food, drink and fun in the park. Many individuals and groups contributed to making it a very special celebration.

November saw 44 children receive their 1st Eucharist, and from them Fr Joe renewed his stocks of altar servers. It was a lovely family celebration. A Parish Sanctuary Committee was formed to meet with the architect the Bishop engaged to consider Sanctuary renovations.

In December we continued our Advent preparations for the celebration of Christmas. People contributed in many ways – flowers for the altar, the busy gardening teams, the St Vincent de Paul Christmas appeal, the groups preparing music for the different Christmas masses. The Family Mass on Christmas Eve was a fine celebration and took a lot of planning and preparation. Frs. John and Joe hosted some Christmas gatherings at the presbytery, a wonderful way to thank and celebrate with the community during the festive season. The Parish History group was also formed in December.

The New Year started well, with the Filipino community inviting Bishop Matthys to celebrate mass in honour of Santo Nino, the infant Jesus, on 16th January. This was followed by a meal. The Filipino community are a great help to Fr Joe, and have become a most valued part of our parish community. The mass drew priests and visitors from across the diocese.

January also saw a flood appeal in response to the disasters in Queensland and Victoria, and a generous \$3032.95 was given to Vinnies for this cause. We also had a solar power system installed on the Church roof, a timely initiative of Jim Schleibs and the finance committee.

The special Australia Day mass was also celebrated, with participation by local aboriginal elders and migrant communities as well as anglo-aussies. Fr Joe wrote, "Gathering together to celebrate and enjoy our 'Aussie-ness' is the priceless reward of the day"

February brought the challenges of a new school year, and Fr Joe's call for more catechists for the state schools was again answered. We are blessed to have generous people prepared to take up this important ministry. There was also a renewal of people prepared to facilitate the children's liturgies during weekend masses.

March brought the start of Lent, and also the celebration of St Patrick. A 5.00pm mass followed by concert, Pride of Erin dance and BBQ was well attended, and marked an ongoing recognition of the Irish contribution to our Aussie Catholic culture. Like all our Parish celebrations, it occurs with the guidance and drive of Fr Joe, and the enthusiastic participation of parishioners. Another example of

Fr Joe's initiative was the presentation of Debutants to Bishop Matthys as part of preparations for the Catholic Ball.

April brought the Easter ceremonies, and special mention must be made of the way Fr John conducted the liturgies. As the high point of the liturgical year, the parish can be proud of the way that Holy Week was celebrated, and Fr John did an excellent job in presiding over his first Easter services. As Fr. Joe wrote: "The joy of the whole exercise is doing all these things together as a parish. This joy is loudly expressed by the Easter Cross because it proclaims the truth that every involvement and every participation in our endeavour as a parish reaches the heart of God...and it blossoms into a beautiful creation like the Easter Cross."

The Anzac Day mass grows in participation and significance each year, and is a credit to Fr Joe and the committee who organise it. Comments from visitors this year were highly appreciative of the beauty and reverence of the occasion.

May was notable for another most successful Catholic Ball, and Anthony Michael and his committee are to be congratulated for the ongoing success of this venture. With Fr Joe's initiative and the participation of Bishop Matthys, the Ball is continuing to thrive, and now has a truly Catholic flavour. Also held in May: a new parishioners welcome BBQ, a pleasing return of this long-standing parish initiative; and the Parish Garage Sale, which raised a total of \$1500.

At the end of May we were saddened to learn that Fr John McHugh was to move to South Tamworth to take up the role of interim Parish Priest. His departure happened quickly, and it was with some haste that a farewell dinner was organised. John was widely thanked for his wonderful contribution to the life of the Parish, and he in turn thanked Fr Joe for his guidance, and the Inverell community for supporting him in his ministry.

Fruit Cake Sunday was held on the 5th June, supported by the Family Groups. We also celebrated Trinity Sunday with a mass in the Holy Trinity School Hall, which was well attended and featured the involvement of many Holy Trinity students. Confirmation Sunday on 26th June again highlighted the wonderful work done in both the state schools and at Holy Trinity in preparing students to receive the sacraments.

July started with marking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday, with a giant Australian flag displayed, donated by Albert and Vicky Talampas, and Rowel and Nhel Gascon. The month ended with a presentation by Fr. Mark O'Brien on 'the Biblical foundation of the Social Justice Teachings of the Church', an initiative of the parish formation team. This forum was quite well attended.

August 2011 saw 40 children make their first reconciliation. The New Translation of the Roman Missal started to be used in our masses. Fr Joe has done a great job of informing us about the changes, and the implementation has been smooth.

With the assent of the Parish Pastoral council, Fr Joe decided to change the format of our children's liturgies from an educational focus to a more prayerful reflection on the scriptures. This Children's liturgy of the Word is more in keeping with what is happening in the main body of the church.

Migrant and Refugee Sunday was celebrated on 28th August, after weeks of preparation. The multicultural meal held after the mass was a great success, and again reflects the great energy with which Fr Joe and the members of our migrant communities get involved in the life of the parish.

Which brings us to September again. I am stepping down from the Parish Pastoral Council after this meeting. I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their contribution to the life of the parish. I would especially like to thank Anne Dale and Brett Pischke who have served as PPC secretary during my time as chairman, and who faithfully kept the minutes of our meetings. I would also like to thank Maureen Newbigin for her work in sending cards on behalf of the parish, to the recently bereaved, and also to mark the birthdays of our senior parishioners who are no longer able to come to mass. It is in ministries such as these, the small, hidden services that people like Maureen undertake, that the real spiritual life of our Parish is made manifest.

Thank you

Dominic Gibson